



THE PICK OF THE GREAT NORTH ROAD

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Thomas Budd
Part of an Experiment in Developing a Civil Society
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The Grave of Thomas Budd



Thomas Budd, soldier, together with his Spanish wife and infant child, arrived in Australia in 1827 as a member of a Royal Veteran Company. He was to become an early Wollombi land holder.

In the early 1820s, bushrangers (absconding convicts) were a problem. To combat this, a mounted police force was established using soldiers serving in Australia. This was unpopular with the military as they lost their best men to the police force. To combat this, it was proposed to raise a Veteran Corps in England to serve as Mounted Police. The Corps was to be raised from retired veteran pensioners. Soldiers who had served at least twenty-one years were eligible for small pension (1). After the Napoleonic wars many regiments were disbanded and many soldiers were out of work. It was planned that the recruited soldiers would serve as guards on convict transports then as mounted police for two years, after which a quarter would be discharge each year to become settlers with land grants. It was expected these ex-soldier settlers would “assist in keeping the degraded class in check” (2). In line with this social experiment the land the ex-soldiers were allocated was spread through the community in small groups. There were conditions attached to the land grants. The soldiers were expected to reside on and cultivate their land for seven years on pain of forfeiture; the government would erect a log hut on the land for the married ex-soldiers and supply them with a cow; and they and their families were supplied with government stores for the first 12 months of settlement.

Governor Darling was very unhappy with this experiment and complained bitterly as he claimed the Veterans were unsuitable and disruptive. In January 1829 he received permission to disband the Veteran Companies and wrote back saying he proposed to disband them progressively (3). Thomas Budd had seen service in Spain, India and Europe. In San Sebastian, Spain he married Hozepha (Sophia) Bosquete (4). She and their infant daughter travelled to Australia with Thomas on the Marquis of Hastings. Thomas was employed during the voyage guarding the convicts, upon arrival it appears he was employed in the Hunter on military duty probably as a mounted policeman. Upon discharge, he took up his land. Thomas Budd was discharged 24 July 1829 and moved to live on his land grant, 100 acres that ran from the north Arm of Wollombi Brook across the Great North Road and up into the hills behind, near what is now called Sweetmans Creek on the road from Wollombi to Maitland. Although granted on 10 August 1829, he did not receive authorisation to take possession till 6 June 1831. This was probably related to the Veteran’s ability to comply with the conditions of settlement. In a return dated 7 October 1829 showing where the Veterans were settled, Thomas Budd is shown at Wollombi together with James Black, William Close, James Deville, John Hamburg, Patrick McIntyre, Nathan Nixon and John Wells (5). It is believed three of these men were allocated grants beside Thomas with the other four allocated grants on the road to Broke. A letter in September 1830 showed that only ex-Veterans James Black, Thomas Budd, John Wells and James Deville remained in Wollombi. William Close and John Hamburg’s grants had been cancelled and it appears that McIntyre and Nixon never took up their grants. Letters from the Resident Magistrate at the Police Office of Maitland showed all the Veterans received two cows from the Government herds. The Budds received their second cow on 1 September 1831 (6). Thomas Budd was not the only Royal Veteran to have some connection with the Great North Road. John Thompson Royal Veteran had brought his family including a nearly grown daughter Ann with him to Australia. In 1834 Ann married Edward Hawkins, the overseer of Hawkins Bridge Party. Her parents were still on their grant in 1835 when her first child was born at Cockfighters Creek in June 1835 (7).



Besides earning an income from farming, Thomas Budd applied for and gained some part time government positions. In May 1830 Thomas was appointed Constable and Poundkeeper at Paterson Plains in place of Patrick Doolan who was then living in what is now Millfield (8). Later the same year he was dismissed as Constable Paterson Plains and appointed special Constable Maitland/Hunter River. In September 1833 he died a fortnight before his son Thomas was born. Thomas was buried on his property near the Great North Road. His grave is marked with a simple sandstone headstone. This simple headstone standing in the bush is potentially of National significance being the only known physical remains of this failed British Government experiment in establishing a Civil Society.

This experiment was destined for failure. These men had been soldiers almost all their working lives and many had been town dwellers prior to the army, they knew nothing about farming. They were all past their prime physically and well into middle age. Put on virgin blocks of land they were confronted with all the difficult physical tasks of clearing and turning the first breaking of the sod. This was without the isolation they were the face as farmers. As soldiers, they were used to living in close quarters in a semi institutionalised manner. It is little wonder most abandoned their blocks of land long before the prescribed seven years had passed.

In a society where there were approximately four males for every female Sophia, despite having several young children, as a young widow would have attracted a number of suitors willing to help her. Especially as she potentially owned a 100 acre farm, much of which was good river flats, if she could fulfil the conditions of living there and cultivating the land. Actually the land passed to her eldest son (9). In April 1835, several months pregnant, she married William Sweetman. William had arrived in 1820 with his convict mother, by 1828 he was apprenticed to Chas Mitchell, a shoemaker at Hungerford, Patricks Plains.

William and Sophia farmed the land for the rest of their lives acquiring additional farming land. When the Deed for the land was drawn up it was given to Thomas's son Thomas, naming his father James to add to the confusion the name on the land on the parish map is William Budd, obviously a combination of Thomas Budd and William Sweetman.

Little did Hozepha realise when she had a headstone erected on Thomas's grave that it would stand not just as a monument to Thomas but also as a monument to the British Government's experiment that brought her so far to the other side of the world.

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Biography

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2. Historic Records Of Australia vol. XII page 48 Taylor to Hay
3. HRA Vol XIV page 612 20 Jan 1829 Darling to Somerset



4. www.users.bigpond.com/mcashman/idxb.htm#174 7 July 2005
5. AONSW 6/1036 Col Sec Letters transcribed by Ray Hawkins
6. AONSW Col Sec in Letters 6/1039 letters 31/1850 transcribed Ray Hawkins
7. Webb Ian. Edward Hawkins – Principle Overseer and Wooden Bridge Builder The Pick Vol 1, 2003 and discussions with Ray Hawkins
8. Marheine, Ken C. Patrick Doolan: Innkeeper. The Pick Vol. 1 2003 page 12.
9. NSW electoral roll 1869-70 Wollombi district.

